

Tonight we come together to salute the honorees again for their profound contributions to our cultural life. At a time when so many forces seem determined to divide us, not simply here but all around the world, the arts and humanities unite us as a people in all of our rich diversity. They give voice to our collective experience and deepen our understandings of ourselves and one another.

At the dawn of a new century in a rapidly changing world, we need our artists, our writers, our thinkers more than ever to help us find that common thread that is woven through all of our lives, to help give our children the imagination they need to visualize the future they must make, and to reach across the lines that

divide us. The people we have honored today have dedicated their lives to this purpose, and I join all Americans in thanking them for their life's work.

I ask all of you now to please join me in a toast to our honorees and to the United States of America.

Hear! Hear!

[At this point, the President toasted the honorees.]

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:30 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Business Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

January 10, 1997

The President. Good morning, everybody. We are here in the Cabinet Room to meet with business leaders and members of the Cabinet to discuss what we all have to do together to provide jobs and training for people who will be making the transition from welfare to work as mandated by the new welfare reform law.

But before we talk more about this, I want to report some good economic news. The Department of Labor reported this morning—on Secretary Reich's last day on the payroll—where is he? [Laughter] He's ending with a bang. The report says that 11.2 million new jobs have now been created in the past 4 years. This is the first time in the history of our economy that over 11 million jobs have been created during one 4-year administration. It is a great tribute to the private sector in America. It is further evidence that our economy is strong, and finally, that our economic strategy to bring down the deficit, expand trade, and invest in our people is working.

I want to thank Secretary Reich for all he has done. I also want to acknowledge—there are two other outgoing members of the administration that had a great role in this economic recovery, Secretary Kantor, both as trade ambassador and as Commerce Secretary, and of

course, Mr. Panetta, who was OMB Director at the time we adopted our economic plan.

The meeting we are convening here this morning builds on the exceptional efforts that have been made over the last 4 years to allow States and local communities the freedom to test their own welfare reform strategies. Last year I signed into law an approach that revolutionized welfare and made it a national mandate to move people who are able-bodied from welfare to work within 2 years. But as I have said repeatedly since that time, that was not the end of welfare reform; it was only the next step.

Now we have to launch a national effort in every State and every community to make sure that the jobs are there for people who have to make the transition from welfare to work. As a first step in that effort, every State has to tailor a welfare reform plan that requires and rewards work, imposes time limits, increases child care payments, and demands personal responsibility. We've already given the green light to 26 of our States to carry out the welfare reform plans they have designated. Today I am pleased to announce that three more States, Louisiana, Maryland, and North Carolina, have been given approval to implement their plans.

The steps we've taken over the last 4 years, working with individual States and communities,

have helped to reduce the welfare rolls by 2.1 million people. Those efforts and the stronger economy have led to the biggest reduction in welfare rolls in the history of this country. But welfare reform now must go on to the next step, and it cannot succeed by Government action alone. There cannot be in our efforts to balance the budget enough money to have some big public works program here to put everyone to work who is required to move into the work force within 2 years. So welfare reform, if it's going to work, will have to have the leadership of the private sector in turning welfare checks into paychecks.

Now, our balanced budget plan has provisions in it to support the business community in helping to create a million more jobs. But today we are going to meet with these business leaders to talk about what specifically they and others can do to help to move people from welfare to work and also to talk about what they can do to help make sure that the States and the communities in this country have actually designed plans that will be attractive to the private sector in helping businesses of all sizes, not just larger businesses, to move from welfare to work and, I might also add, nonprofit organizations who are also eligible to participate in these initiatives. Just a few days ago we had our annual prayer breakfast here, and I challenged the religious organizations, as employers, to participate in this program.

So a number of these companies represented around this table have already been very active in this. We're going to have a good meeting, and I look forward to success. But I do want to make it clear to the American people, that welfare reform law did not put anybody to work. Unless we can create new jobs in the private sector within the 2-year timeline, the welfare reform effort will not succeed. And we're depending on the leaders around this table, people like them throughout America, to help us to achieve that goal.

Conspiracy To Manipulate the Media

Q. Mr. President, do you think there is a right-wing cabal in the press against you?

The President. No.

Presidential Immunity From Civil Charges

Q. Mr. President, are you concerned that the purely legal question that goes to the Supreme Court on Monday in your civil case will become

a pretext for hauling out the whole story again and causing you more difficulty?

The President. I don't have any control over what anyone else does. I can only control what I do. It's not going to cause me any difficulty because I'm going to do my job here.

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, you referred to the jobs figures that came out earlier today as good news. As you're aware, not only was the December report pretty strong but both the October and November reports were revised upwards. Are you concerned at all that this strength may signal a building up of inflationary pressures in the economy?

The President. No. Based on the conversation I had with Chairman Greenspan last week, that's one of the things—or I guess earlier this week—one of the things that he noted—Secretary Rubin and I were there—was that the normal inflation pressures, at least if you go back till the end of World War II, that you would see with this kind of job growth and by modern standards a low unemployment rate just have not materialized. And he speculated on a number of the reasons why that might be so.

But I basically believe, as long as we're competitive, as long as our markets are open, as long as we're reaching out to new markets around the world, as long as we're seeing American workers continue to upgrade their skills and American businesses employ technology and better production techniques to improve their productivity, that we can keep this going without undue inflation. At least now there's no evidence of it. The only place we've had any spike in inflation is in energy prices, which was unrelated to the general growth in jobs. So I'm very hopeful right now.

Federal Reserve Board Nominations

Q. When do you expect to nominate replacements for the two Fed Governors who are leaving? Do you have any people in mind?

The President. I don't know. One of them just materialized. But I'll turn my attention to it, and I'll do it in a timely fashion.

Political Consultant Dick Morris

Q. Did Dick Morris violate his confidence by writing a book and taking credit for everything good that happened to you in the last several months?

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The President. I thought the last sentence of the introduction of his book said that he was not responsible for my getting reelected, I was. [Laughter] So I would think that you would have to say that was a rather selective reading

of the book, if that's the way you read it. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:15 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Remarks to the 1996 National Hockey League Champion Colorado Avalanche

January 10, 1997

I'd like to welcome all of you to the White House, especially Representative Diana DeGette; and Charlie Lyons, the president of Ascent Entertainment; and of course the 1996 Stanley Cup winners, the Colorado Avalanche.

I'm pleased that all of you could join us today to congratulate the team, especially the people who have come all the way from Colorado. Ice hockey is one of the fastest, most exciting games going, and there was an article in one of the papers yesterday detailing all the cities in America that now want a hockey franchise. I think it's because Colorado won the championship so quickly. [Laughter]

When you watch an amazing team like the Avalanche take the ice, you understand why children all over our country for the first time are trying on skates and crowding the rinks. This was a very awe-inspiring performance that this team turned in this year.

No one could have anticipated the kind of season you've had when you moved to Denver just 18 months ago, rolling over the NHL like the avalanche you are so well named for. You swept the final series against the Florida Panthers, a great team who deserve a lot of credit for being the youngest expansion team to make it to the Stanley Cup final after only 3 years in the league. And as the Avalanche played out the final minutes of the triple overtime game that brought you to victory, you also showed what teamwork is all about. I may show those final minutes to the Cabinet repeatedly over the next 2 years. [Laughter]

In one short season, you captured the heart of your new home city and gave Colorado its

first major sports championship ever. Your coach, Marc Crawford, is the third youngest coach in history to lead a team to a Stanley Cup victory. That's a remarkable achievement, something I can identify with. I used to be the youngest person doing things—[laughter]—a long time ago. At 27, Joe Sakic brings incredible talent and maturity to the team, and I see him here recovering from his recent injury. I hope you'll be back on your skates soon. Your outstanding goalie, Patrick Roy, must be used to this by now. Of course, this is his third Stanley Cup victory. I understand he's an avid golfer as well, and the difference is, of course, in golf you're not allowed to block the other person's shots. [Laughter] I must say, there have been a lot of times when I wished there had been someone there to block mine.

This victory belongs to every player on the team. By bringing home to Denver and to Colorado their first ever professional sports championship, you have justified the loyalty and pride of some ferociously loyal and proud fans. And I think it highly likely that you'll keep them happy again this year too. After your win against the Senators last night, I know you're number one in the NHL again.

Now I'd like to introduce the commissioner of the National Hockey League, Gary Bettman, to continue the program.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Charlie Lyons, chairman, and Joe Sakic, center, Colorado Avalanche.